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INTRODUCTION.

NOTHING is more destructive of the common Interest of Religion, than the learned Impertinence of those who broach new Errors in the Church. These are Heads of Factious in Religion, as Prime Ministers and Court Politicians are in the State.

It has indeed been the Fate of all Churches, and of none more than the Church of *England*, to have Sectaries and Dividers break in upon the Ecclesiastick Constitution, subverting Order and Government, and breaking in even upon her Doctrinal Foundations. But then the Church always found a way to clear her Hands of the Incumbrance by her Discipline ; so that the Leaders of Error and Heresies finding it impossible to avoid the just Censures of the Church, have had recourse to Violence, and set up Sects of their own, separating themselves from the Body, and supporting their first Defection by farther Breaches in that Union, which it was their Duty to have preserv'd.

Thus Traytors, when they have in vain carry'd on their secret Conspiracies, till they see their Plots discovered, and find themselves in Danger of being apprehended,

prehended and brought to Justice, break out in open Rebellion, and maintain by declared War, the Treason they had hatch'd in private. From hence sprung all the Divisions, Schisms and Breaches in this Protestant Church (*viz.*) from new Opinions started by warm Heads, and carry'd on to open Breaches, Separations, and even to the setting up differing Churches, Altar against Altar, and Priest against Priest, one Schism on one Side, and another Schism on another Side, till even the Church it self has, by the Potency of Error, been brought into the greatest Distress, and her Government and Discipline has been sunk into a State of Degeneracy, Inaction, and indeed to almost a perfect Disability for a Time.

While these Wounds are as it were yet bleeding, or at least, while the Scars of them remain, we have the Disaster to see the Church attack'd again in a manner, which if it be not speedily check'd, and the Mischief prevented, may in time prove more fatal and mischievous to her Constitution, than all that ever went before.

For when the Divisions mention'd above began among us, the Church was vigorous and active, the Uniformity of her Principles was perfect, and she had the Strength of the whole Nation in her Hand, by which she stood fast and firm; and tho' the Differences prov'd great, and at last irreconcilable, yet the Church remaining unmoveable, cast out those that troubled her, and that separated from her; the Enemy was known and open, and she had no more to do but to defend her Constitution.

But now the Breach is of a different Nature, the Treason is within, and the Traytors are her secret Friends, nay, even her own Members; she is divided against her self, like the War in the Body between the Belly and Members, her Enemies are *those of her own House*, those who should Protect and Support her are the Betrayers of her Interest; her Leaders turn Leaders of Error and Fomenters of her Breaches, one pulls this way, and another that way; and while some take part with

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with *Paul*, and some with *Apollos*, the Body suffers terrible Convulsions, *Principle* and *Practice* go dreadfully to wreck, and the very Constitution of the Church threaten'd with a sudden and total Subversion.

S E C T. I.

Of the PRESENT STRIFE among Churchmen, whence the Warmth and Unchristian Heat with which these things are carry'd on, may be said immediately to proceed. And a word of the Mischief of that mistaken Thing called Z E A L.

THE Disputes that at this time may particularly be said to afflict this Church are these : 1. The Notion of a Schism being made in the general Unity, by the Defection of the *Nosjurors* from the Civil Establishment, they denying the Regal Supremacy to be in the present Sovereign, and by Consequence the Ecclesiastick Authority and Succession of the present Bishops, as not constituted by a lawful Power.

This was not carry'd to its full height, however it might be maintain'd by the dispossessed Clergy, and disputed upon by the Learned, tho' mistaken Mr. *Dodwell*, and others, till Dr. *Hickes* took it up; he was a Man of a great Character for Learning and strictnes of his Conversation, and this only excepted, was really every way valuable to good Men. But he was so overwhelm'd in the Opinion which I am now upon, that he left behind him a kind of Constitution, a System of Ecclesiastick Jacobitism as a Foundation on which to charge the present Establishment of the Church to be Schismatical, and to be broken off from the real and true Church of *England*, which he affirm'd to be, and remain only in those who had steadily adhered to their former King; to whom, and to whose Race they pretend to be bound in the Obligation of the Oaths of Allegiance then sworn to, which no human Power could dissolve, dispense with, or discharge them from.

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This System Mr. Howell, a Clergy-man also in the same Interest, takes up, and giving an Abstract of it, publishes a Defence of the Opinion it self, thereby making the Notion, and the Offence given by it, his own Act and Deed ; which impolitick Step has involv'd him personally in much Trouble, the Government taking hold of his Publication, to punish him as a Libeller of the State, as well as a Troubler of the Church, and he lies now in Prison under a heavy Sentence for the same ; his Book is entitled, *The Case of Schism in the Church of England truly stated.*

Before I enter upon the seconde Head of Division, I think 'tis needful to lay down this precaution, as to the Intent and Meaning of thus stating and presenting to your view these unhappy Subjects of Contention, (viz.) that I am not here entring into the Merits of the Case on either Side; neither shall I so much as give my own Opinion in the Argument of one or other ; the Design of this Work being to shew not who is *in the Right* as to Notion, whose Opinion is Erroneous and whoie Orthodox ; not, *I say*, who is *in the Right*, but that both are *in the Wrong*, and that the Publick Peace of this Church is in Danger of being entirely betrayed by the Contention ; and this I do in order, if possible, to perwade Men to lay aside their present Temper of continued quarrelling *About Religion*, least by Degrees, they teach them selves to quarrel *At Religion*. I has been the Opinion of wise Men in all Ages, that the Quarrels among religious Men, besides the other Mischiefs which have ordinarily attended them, have had this constant ill Consequence attending them, (viz.) that they have brought Religion it self into Contempt and that more than all the other parts of human ill Conduct, nay more than even Vice and Immortality generally speaking, have been able to do : and the Reason is plain, Vice is committed as a Crime, exposes it self and the Persons who are charg'd with it to Scandal, and first or last, brings punishment from the Government, who concern themselves to discourage it by Laws, and good Magistrates to suppress it by their Authority.

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thority. But religious Quarrels are always cover'd Pretences of being in the Right, with loud Boasts of Conscience, and that Mistaken thing call'd *ZEAL*. This is a fiery Hot thing, combustible in its Nature, and made use of by the Devil's Engineers to bombard Religion it self, and set the Church on Fire: *ZEAL* has been the Firebrand of the World, has overturn'd more Kingdoms, and spilt more Blood than Ambition, Revenge, and all the most furious Vices of Mankind. It was this made *Je-hu* drive furiously, and call People about him to bear Witness of his Hypocrisy; *Come see my ZEAL for the Lord*. It was this made *Je-zabel* slay the Prophet of the Lord, and has been the Mother of all the bloody Persecutions *Irish* and *French* Massacres, and religious Murders in the World. It was *ZEAL* sent all our Kings in former Days a sauntering, i. e. a making War in *Terra Sancta*, or the *Holy Land*, to kill innocent Men only, because they liv'd in *Judea*; where yet we did not care to live our selves, and from whence we had no just Right to remove them. *ZEAL* hurry'd ten Millions of Men to lay their Bones in that remote Country, upon a mere sham pretence of Religion, or at least a mistaken Notion of it, to dispossess the Enemies of God of that Country; which nevertheless, *had they read the Scripture*, they would have found that God himself had resolved should not be done; and that his People having offended him, *That Land should be a Desolation, and that the Enemies should dwell thereon*, Levit. 26. 32. *ZEAL* has kindled innumerable Civil Wars, raised Feuds among Friends, Envy among Brethren, Tyranny among Princes, and Rebellion among Subjects; and it is a general Observation which few will deny to be just, (viz.) that no Contention has been so fatal, no War so bloody, no Battel so furious, as those fought in the Quarrels of Religion, and animated by the pretended *ZEAL* of the Parties, according to *Hudibras*.

*Zeal makes Men Fight like mad or drunk,
For Dame Religion, as for Punk.*

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Upon the account of this inraging Principle it is, that religious Differences are so generally fatal to Religion it self, because they drive Men into such Extreams of Fury, Rage, Revenge, and in so unchristian a manner, raise and exasperate their Spirits, as carry them beyond the reach of Principle, and out of the Power of being influenced by Reason or Religion ; and therefore it is that the Scripture says expresly, that the Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness of God.

To bring this home to our present Case, I may appeal to any Man who has observed the Conduct of our religious Feuds to tell me, if there is not an irreconcileable, uncommon Spirit of Rage and Fury between the two contending Parties in the Case above-mention'd, such as is not ordinarily seen, and which were it to come to blows, would perhaps draw Blood with more Gust and Appetite to slaughter, than in most Protestant Quarrels that ever have been in the World.

2. The second religious Quarrel which at present distracts this Church, is the Controversy set on foot by the Writings of a certain Bishop, now executing Episcopal Jurisdiction in this Church ; if the Testimony not only of Particular Writers, who have opposed him, may be credited ; but if the Opinion of the whole Assembly of Divines, *to use an unpleasant Word*, met together in the Provincial Synod, or Convocation of the Province of Canterbury ; I say, if their Opinion may be accepted and be esteem'd of Value, this certain Bishop has divested the Church of all her Authority ; their Words are these :

If the Doctrine contain'd in these Passages be admitted, their neither is, nor hath been, since our Saviour's Time, any Authority in the Christian Church, in matters relating to Conscience and Salvation ; nor even in the Apostles themselves : but all Acts of Government in such Cases, have been an Invasion of Christ's Authority, and an Illempyation upon His Kingdom.

I do not enquire, whether the Bishop's new System of Divinity, for such it may seem by these Things, deserve

deserve such a Censure, or whether what he advances be right or Wrong ; the End of this Discourse is not to determine the Controversy, but to shew the Mischief done to the Church of God by those who have brought such a Controversy upon the Stage. Neither do I enquire whether the Doctrines and Positions of the Bishop are such as may be supported or not, and whether it be true or not, as he alledges, (viz.)

As the *Church of Christ* is the *Kingdom of Christ*, He himself is *King*: and in this it is implied, that He is himself the sole *Law-giver* to his *Subjects*, and himself the sole *Judge* of their *Behaviour*, in the Affairs of *Conscience* and *Eternal Salvation*. And in this Sense therefore, *His Kingdom is not of this World*; that He hath, in those Points, left behind Him, no visible humane *Authority*; no *Viceroy*s who can be said properly to supply his Place; no *Interpreters*, upon whom his *Subjects* are absolutely to depend; no *Judges* over the *Consciences* or *Religion* of his *People*. For if this were so that any such absolute *Viceroy* *Authority*, either for the making *New Laws*, or interpreting *Old Ones*, or judging his *Subjects*, in *Religious Matters*, were lodged in any Men upon Earth; the Consequence would be, that what still retains the Name of the *Church of Christ*, would not be the *Kingdom of Christ*, but the *Kingdom* of those Men, vested with such *Authority*. For, whoever hath such an *Authority* of making *Laws*, is so far a *King*: and who ever can add new *Laws* to those of *Christ*, equally obligatory, is as truly a *King* as *Christ* himself is: Nay, whoever hath an *Absolute Authority* to *Interpret* any written or spoken *Laws*; it is *He*, who is truly the *Law-giver*, to all *Intents* and *Purposes*; and not the Person who first wrote or spoke them.

I say, I do not enquire into the Validity of these Arguments on one Side or other, tho' it be necessary to state them, and lay down a Sketch of them, as they are publish'd on both sides; but the Design of this Work is to enquire of the Good or Evil, of the Disputes themselves, of which in the next Section at large.

S E C T. II.

Of Divisions in the Church, with some Observations from the first Ages of Christianity, when religious Differences were fatal to Religion it self ; and an Enquiry, whether it is not alike Dangerous at this Time, or perhaps much more ? With a Parallel drawn between the Story of Theophilus the Bishop, and the Convocation of Egypt, and the present Story of Bishop Benjamin, and the Convocation at Westminster.

Teachers of Error in Religion, are like speaking Members in the House of Commons, who are the Leaders of other Mens Votes, and carry Parties in the State, as the other do Proselytes in the Church.

When these Teachers, as above, broach new and erroneous Opinions, they always draw in Crowds to maintain them, as rich Men find Nurses to bring up their Bastards, not enquiring whether they are legitimate Children or no : for Example,

If a *Hicks* in the Church broaches Opinions in Prejudice of the Revolution and present Settlement, stripping the Ecclesiastick Hierarchy of its ancient Supporter, (viz.) the *Regal Supremacy*, and overthrowing all the Foundations of the Government and Authority in the Church, founded on that Establishment, he shall not want a *Howell*, who at the utmost Hazard, and in Contempt of the Danger, shall espouse his Quarrel, and carry on that Notion in an open Impeachment of the Constitution, and by suffering for his Opinion, shall beget a Reverence even for his Name.

If a *H—ly* on the other hand, set up to strip the Church of the Pontificate, and to leave her no Authority, but what every private Perswasion is to be superior to ; if he broaches forty Errors, and support them all by the Countenance and Protection of powerful Factions, whether in Court or elsewhere, he shall not want Heads or Hands to support him, and to carry on his Errors.

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Nay, the very Enemies of the Church wisely busy themselves to find out, set up, and encourage such Champions, and stand by to prompt and set them on, that there may never want Strife and Contention to agitate the serious Professors of Religion, and destroy the Peace of the Church.

The Truth of this is apparent to every considering Person, and will be more conspicuous, if we consider, how even in this little Controversy so newly begun, yet as it were in its Infancy, and but just started into the World ; *we see already* the whole Nation, as it were, entirely embark'd ; the Co—t against the Church, the Church against the Co—t ; the Convocation against the Bishop, the Bishop against the Convocation ; the Upper House against the Lower House, the Lower House against the Upper House ; in a word, the Clergy themselves against the Clergy themselves ; Principle against Practice, Practice against Principle ; one pulling down the Regal Authority, another the Ecclesiastick Authority ; and is all this for the Service of the Church ? Is it possible, that Men can pretend this is the way to support the Church, propagate the Interest of Religion, or encrease the Reverence which Men ought to entertain in their Minds for the publick Order and Government of the Church ? or rather, is it not the immediate and most direct Method to bring all Religion into Contempt, to lessen and discourage Piety and Devotion, and let in Confusion and Irreligion into, and spread it over the whole Kingdom ?

That it has been thus in former Ages, History is full of Examples ; in all which it appears, that Disputes of the most indifferent Things have been the Beginnings of unknown and boundless Divisions, Breaches and Schisms in the Church, to the Ruin of Charity and Peace, and the great Obstruction of the Progress of Religion in the World.

In the first Ages of the Church, what an almost incredible Breach, and how fatal to the Advancement of the Christian Faith, was the Dispute among the Fathers themselves, about the Time of the Observation of

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of *Easter*, insomuch, that whole Churches, and in some Places whole Nations of Churches refused Communion with one another, about that one Trifle, as I may call it, compared to its Consequences? Nay, *Victor* Bishop of *Rome* excommunicated all the Churches of *Asia*, that kept the Feast of *Easter* on the Fourteenth Moon, for not conforming to his Account, which appointed it to be kept always on a *Sunday*, as being the first Day of the Week, on which our Lord was risen. On the other hand, *Irenaeus* Bishop of *Lyons*, tho' he held not with the Bishop of *Asia*, yet wrote a sharp Reprof to the Bishop of *Rome*, for his contentious Spirit, and urged, as might well be now repeated to our modern Bishop and Clergy on both Sides, to seek rather those things which concern'd Peace, Love and Unity, between Brethren*. The same Antiquity furnishes us with this Observation, concerning the first Contentions among Christians †, ' The Church being once divided, rested not in the first Divisions, but such as were severed into sundry Sects and Schisms, lamentably fell from their Fellows, and upon light and trifling Occasions, continually disagreed among themselves. Again, speaking of the Divisions among the *Arians* and others, we have a like Observation, †† ' The Controversy was not of Religion, but of Primacy, belike it was between two Bishops, they strove whether of them should be chief. Insignificant Trifle! as to Religion in general; and yet it divided whole Nations; for the *Goths* went with *Agapius*, the *Greeks* with *Marinus*; and what was the Consequence? The Historian says expressly, ' Many perceiving the Ambition, the Rancor and Malice of the Persons contending, forsook their Opinion, and joyn'd with the Faith of one Substance. Now the Moral of the Quotation is the same, were the Parties on what Side soever, *Arians* or

* *Eusebius Eccles. Hist. lib. 5. cap. 23.*

† *Soc. Scholast. lib. 5. cap. 22.*

†† *Socrat. Scholasticus. lib. 5. cap. 21.*

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Orthodox, (viz.) *That the Consequence of Divisions in the Church was in Many, that they forsook the Faith it self.*

The like ridiculous and yet fatal Contention happen'd among the Clergy in the Time of the Emperor *Arcadius*; the *Roman Empire* being then in its declining Condition, and the *Church* in great Danger also from the Inundations of the *Goths*, and other Nations of *Barbarians*, as well as from the Fury of private *Factions* and *Rebellions* in the State. Even in this Time of publick Danger did the Clergy, and with them whole Nations also enter into that stupid fenceless Dispute, and into dreadful Breaches and Divisions about it, (viz.) *Whether God was to be conceiv'd of as having a Body, and that this Body was after the Likeness and Form of Man?* This Strife came it seems, to that height, that the Clergymen of *Egypt* had murder'd *Theophilus* Bishop of *Alexandria*, for refusing to acknowledge God the Father in the Shape of an Old Man, had he not relin-
quish'd his Orthodox Opinion, and submitted to them with a Baseness, which rendred him afterwards very contemptible.

I cannot take the present Controversy between the Bishop and the Convocation, to have much Difference in the *Importance of it to the Church*, from that between *Theophilus*, the Bishop of *Alexandria*, and the Clergy of *Egypt*; you may call them the *Convocation of Egypt*, if you please: Their Dispute, as a learned Man oberved upon it some Ages ago, tended rather to confound and de-
stroy Religion, than to promote and excite it. And the like may be said now: There was no Necessity of enquiring into the Ideas we were to form in the Mind concerning God, as whether he was to be supposed to retain a Shape, or Form, or Substance? seeing we are taught by the Christian Religion, to know him only by the Works of his Power and Mercy, which give the greatest, and best, and most glorious Ideas of his Being, so we are forbid to represent him by any Image.—In like manner, of what Signification is it to us, as to *Religion and eternal Salvation*, to enquire what Power, or what Authority Christ has left be-
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hind him in his Church ? If any Man usurp an Authority which God has not given him, the Invasion be upon him : This we know, that if any Man in the Church exercises the Power and Authority which he has received for good Purposes ; if any Man, I say, exercises it for a bad Purpose, or to do Evil, we know by that Token, that his Power is not of God ; for God gives no Power to be exercised to do Evil, or to promote the doing Evil in others.

On the other hand, what Advantage can Strife and Contention bring to the Church of God ? What does it less or more, but bring Religion into Contempt, and weaken the Hands of all those who are concern'd in the Church's Interest, and in the great Work of spreading Religion through the World, by exposing them to the just Roproaches of the Enemies of Religion in general ? In a word, these are some of those Things which make the Ways of God be evil spoken of, and which discourage Men from embracing the Christian Religion, as they would otherwise do ; for they bring an ill Report upon the Work they are engaged in, and make People think Religion is a doubtful thing, which those who are the very Teachers and Instructors of do not rightly understand, but are always quarreling and contending about.

Was ever a Controversy of this kind carry'd this length ? what can there be in it thus to embroil a whole Nation, and embark a whole Society of Men of Letters in it ? The Consequence of all this can be nothing more or less, than exposing themselves to the Scorn and Contempt of all good Men, and the Church of England to the Scandal of being the most divided Society of Christians in the World ; except it be, that there are Reasons to believe that the Strife also will encrease, till perhaps the Constitution of the Church may be mortally wounded by it ; and if it be entirely overthrown, the Crime will be theirs who have been the Cause of all this needless Contention.

S E C T. III.

A serious Enquiry into what Justifiable ground there is at this Time for all the Contention which has happen'd in the Church, whether upon the suggested SCHISM, or upon the Question of Authority in the Church, and whether they are not One the Consequence of the Other.

IT is a very just Enquiry, and what seems natural to every unbyass'd Person to make, especially after they have seen what Confusions these things run us into, what justifiable ground there is for all this Strife ?

And here that I may distinguish right, and not be mistaken either on one Side or other, I desire my Readers to keep to the word justifiable ; for any one can assign the ordinary grounds of the Quarrel, and it is easy to fix them in the contentious divided Temper of our civil Parties, such as Nonjurors and Jurors, High-Church and Low ; but it will be wondrous hard to make out, that these are justifiable Grounds.

Some undertake to link this Controversy to that between the Nonjurors and the present Revolution-Establishment of the Church, which according to Dr. Hicks's Constitution is Schismatical, and a breaking off from Catholick Unity ; and these Men perhaps for want of being able to shew sufficient Reasons for it in our selves, load the Nonjurors with the Crime, and tell us that the Assault made upon the Church by Dr. Hicks, Mr. Howell, and their Party, has obliged the Bishop of Bangor to enter into a more nice Disquisition of Ecclesiastick Authority, than otherwise was ever intended ; but that this made it necessary.

Others, on the contrary say, that Dr. Hicks and the Bishop, tho' differing the uttermost Extream in their Consequences, as they do in the Political Principles, yet join and say much the same Thing, with respect to their Opposition to the Regal Supremacy, and to the modern C A N T (so they call it) of J E S U S C H R I S T being the only King and Head of his Church, and sole Law-giver, Judge and Interpreter ; and that it is most easy to bring

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Dr. Hicks's and the Bishop's Words to mean the same thing, tho' they apply them two ways, as contrary as Light and Dark, and as opposite as the Poles.

Now thus far I will say in this Case, that tho' I do not allow Dr. Hicks and the Bishop to mean the same Thing, any more than they aim at the same End; yet that as there is so great a Handle given to the Nonjurors, by the very Argument the Bishop uses, that however he, the Bishop, may by his extraordinary Skill, turn it directly against the Nonjurors, yet they want no Skill to make it seem to their Advantage in the vulgar Arguings, and to mean Understandings. For, say they, if Jesus Christ be the only King and Head of his Church, which is his Kingdom; if he is the sole Law-giver, the sole Judge and Interpreter of his own Laws; if he has left no Vicegerent, no Authority behind him to supply his Place: Then, say they, all the Authority exercised in the Church to depose the Bishops and Clergy, the immediate Subjects and Officers in Christ's Kingdom (his Church) is according to the Bishop an Usurpation upon Christ Jesus his only Kingship and an Invasion of his Authority.

This is the Argument those Men use, who are, I say, in the Interest of the Nonjurors: All the use I make of it is this; that albeit we may effectually clear the Bishop from any Retrospect towards Jacobitism, that the Strain of his Arguments run clear another way; yet it may be much a propo to the Subject I am upon at present, to enquire modestly, whether there being a seeming Oneness of Argument, and that it may be so easily turn'd to mean the same thing with the Jacobites; or if it be no more than this, that it is the same thing from which they draw Inferences to the Advantage of their Cause: whether then it had not been better that such Things had been let alone at this Time, tho' the Bishop himself may have no View that way, and not the least Intention to encourage those that have?

All the justifiable ground I have yet heard any one pretend to for this Argument at this Time, was, that it was thought necessary to lay this down as a Thesis, to establish the

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the Minds of those Great Men, who were soon after to enter upon a great Debate, upon the Repealing those Statutes which some People among us call at this Time Grievances, and Oppressions upon Conscience.

Whether those Men give these harsh Epithets to those Laws which formerly they had other Notions of, from a Political or a conscientious Principle, is not for me to enquire, much less to determine; tho' as some of the Persons are the same who formerly gave their Votes with particular Earnestness for the making those Laws, and give us this Occasion to question their Sincerity, (viz.) that they never yet shewed us that they dislik'd the Laws themselves, or had alter'd their Judgment concerning the Expediency of them till now, that they are engag'd in a Party-Interest, which seems to have an Occasion for it.

But to leave these Reflections to Time, and the Persons to their cooler Thoughts, I cannot but insist on what I said before, (viz.) that I think we have much Reason to say, that the Necessity is not equal to the mischievous Consequence of the Thing it self, and that this Dispute is so far in it self very unseasonable.

Nor will I confine my Observation so as to make it in the least Partial; for I will not say, but that after it had been started in the World, it had still been happy, had it stop'd with the Bishop, or with the Bishop and Dr. Snape; and that the Convocation letting it all sleep among the many other Opinions and Notions advanc'd in the World, which tho' they approve as ill as they do this, they are oblig'd to let alone, and suffer to be spread among a divided erroneous People, because they cannot help it.

So that upon the whole, we find it very hard to assign any justifiable ground, either for beginning or carrying on to such a height, a Dispute of such a Nature as will be sure to divide the whole Church, and more or less be a Bone of Contention and Strife among the People, to the Scandal even of the Reformation it self.

Again, as the Grounds of this new Contention are not justifiable in themselves, so those very Things, which on other Occasions might have seem'd to justify them be-

fore, render them the more unjustifiable now ; I mean, the Consequences, which at this Time more than at another, attend a Dispute of this Nature ; which leads directly to the last Head, and which indeed, like the Application of the Text, is the chief Reason of this Discourse.

S E C T. IV.

Of what may probably be the Consequences of these religious Breaches, and where it is likely to end.

IT is hard to assign all the pernicious Consequences of such a Controversy as this, at this Time ; and I say at this Time, because really it is rather the Time of the Controversy than any great Weight there is in what has been yet advanc'd, that makes it pernicious to the publick Peace. For Example,

1. Like the rest of our private Quarrels, of which there are innumerable Instances, it will certainly run all into our Party Breach, and thereby widen the Gap, at which eternal Mischiefs daily enter, rendering that happy Reconciliation which a publick Act of Grace gave some hopes of among the People, perfectly remot and out of View. It is not an ill Improvement which a certain Pamphlet, whose Author I join heartily with, tho' I know him not, has made upon the Notion of a General Pardon ; (viz.) 'That it is an Act of Oblivion ; and that as it shows the KING willing to shew Mercy to his Enemies, and reconcile all his People himself ; so it ought to reconcile his People one to another : This cannot be perfect in its own Nature if it does not bury in Oblivion all our private Animosities, Feuds, and Prejudices one at another, reconcile our Differences, and cause our Breaches to heal ; and that it is the especial Duty of his Majesty's Subjects, who value the Interest of their native Country, or the Safety of Religion, to exhort one another to Peace, and friendly, quiet, neighbourly living one with another, as the only way to make the General Pardon useful to them, and to have it answer the great Ends for which such a Thing is intended.'

tended, and the only way to bring God's Blessing a-
gain among us. IF this be our Duty, it must be a Re-
proach upon all that have a hand in the beginning or car-
rying on such Controversies as these, or indeed any other
Controversies which tend to embroiling and distracting
the People, and to keeping open those Breaches which
the Royal Clemency so much desires to heal: And let
this fall where it will, I am free to say, that as starting
such Disputes as these necessarily engages the People in
new Controversies, dividing them one from another,
and breaking in upon that Harmony, Charity and Peace
which is the Glory of Christianity, and the inestimable
Blessing of a Nation; so far they are hateful to all peace-
ably disposed Christians, and to all that understand
and wish well to the Publick Interest, whether of KING
or People; and the Persons who do this, whether it be
through Ignorance or wilful Design of Evil, are so
far Enemies to their Country.

It is the unhappiness of our present Circumstances, that
we are so divided in the main Affair of Politicks and
Matters of Civil Government, that it is impossible now
that any popular Question can be stated among us, but
the People run into the Congroversy by Parties; all of
one Party in Politicks take one Side of the Question,
and all of the other Party in Politicks, take the other Side
of the Question, and so overwhelm the religious Argu-
ments still with the Clamour and Noise of their Party-
Arguments, that it is no more a Question between the
Bishop and the Doctor, or between the Bishop and
the Lower House of Convocation; but between Whig
and Tory, High Church and Low Church.

And what is the Consequence of all this? Truly one
of the Consequences are, that the Fury, for I cannot
call it Zeal, of Parties drowns all the Conscience of Prin-
ciple or Zeal for Religion. Be the Bishop's Argument
ever so just, so well founded, so capable of Demonstration,
so agreeable to the Scripture, so essential to Religion, as
some say it is; yet it shall not weigh on one Side against
the Force of Party. Or be the Bishop's Argument an
Encouragement to Phanaticism, a Support to Nonjurors,
nay,

nay, a Vindication of all kinds of Separation from the Church, yet it weighs not, on the other Side, against the Force of Party.

While then such an Argument is certain to have such Consequences, and to run so universally into our Party Quarrels, what serious Christian who had at Heart his Country's Peace, the Safety of Religion, or the Interest of the Government, could satisfy himself to engage the Nation in such Quarrels about Religion, as must widen those Breaches, which all good Men are now so desirous to heal.

2. It is a Consideration not at all unworthy of the greatest Prelate, or the greatest Body of Prelates, whether this Dispute as it is apparent, is both *IS*, and by the Necessity of our present Circumstances, as to Temper, *will be carry'd on*, does not tend to bring Religion into Contempt; and especially, whether it does more particularly tend to expose the Church of *England* to the Reproach of all her Enemies, whether Popish or Anti-prelatick, as having for so many Ages acted in opposition to what is now said to be her Scripture Rule, and to have exercised an Authority which she had no Warrant for in Scripture; but on the contrary, has usurp'd upon the Sovereignty of Christ Jesus, invaded his reserv'd Power, and made use of those Weapons which were never lawfully put into their Hands?

If this is true, and that these Things tend to raise Reproach upon the Church, or upon the Clergy of the Church, with what Face of Affection to the Church's Interest, can these Men be said to *be* A&T, who hurry us into a Strife, which at all Times, but at this Time more than ever, is of such fatal Consequence.

3. Whether another Consequence of this Dispute will not be the raising up Enemies at Home against the Church it self, and against the essential Branches of her Constitution, and not to enter here into the Enquiry, whether the Discipline and Government of the Church, being impeach'd by her own Members, is not an Encouragement to the Enemies of the Church, to arraign her of Treason and Usurpation against Jesus Christ, her King and Head: I say, not to enter here into an Enquiry

quiry that may provoke any to pretend to oppose, I refer the Bishop and Convocation, of which his Lordship is a Member, to a virulent Libel, publish'd by a Scots Presbyterian very lately, and upon this only Account, openly arraigned not this Convocation only, but all Convocations of the Clergy of the Church of *England*, as useless, dangerous, and fatal to Religion; and this at the very same time, when a Convocation or National Assembly of Presbyterians in *Scotland* was actually sitting and acting; and this is very particular and worth Observation. I referr you to the Libeller's own Words, as follows:

Letter upon Convocations.

SIR,

May 22. 1717.

YOUR Papers in Relation to the Proceeding of the Convocation, being generally approv'd by those who are Friends to our present Establishment in Church and State, I have transcrib'd the inclos'd Passages, as believing they may deserve a Place in your Paper at this Time.

Some Men think they cannot pay too great a Diference to the Authority of the Holy Synods of former Times, Tho' in Truth, there is Scarce any Thing (As the judicious Dr. *Wake* observes) in Antiquity which either more expos'd our Christian Profession heretofore, or may more deserve our serious Consideration at this Day, then the Violence, the Passion, the Malice, the Falseness, and the Oppression which reign'd in most of those Synods held by *Constantine* first, and after him by the following Emperors, upon the Occasion of the Controversy about Religion. Bitter are the Complaints: which we are told that great Emperor made of them. The *Barbarians* (says he, in a Letter to one of them) for fear of us worship God, but we mind what only tends to Hatred, to Dissension; in one Word, to the Destruction of Mankind.

The

‘ The Writers of the 4th and 5th Centuries (as the Bishop of Sarum acknowledges) give us dismal Representations of the Corruptions of their Times; and the scandalous Inconstancy of the Councils of those Ages, is too evident a Proof of what we find said by the good Men of those Days; but Things fell lower and lower in succeeding Ages. It was an amazing Thing in the very Office of consecrating Bishops, Examinations are order'd concerning those Crimes, the very mention of which gives Horror.

‘ If the early Councils were *none of the best*, those which succeeded them became *worse*, and never left undermining the Christian Religion, till, by degrees, they destroyed the Essence of it, and in its Place introduc'd Popery, which cannot be deny'd to be all *Priest-craft* from the Beginning to the End; or, to make Use of Andrew Marvel's Words, ‘ Popery is the most insolent Attempt upon the Credulity of Mankind, and Abstract of whatever is most ridiculous and impious in other Religions, incorporated with peculiar Absurdities of its own; and all this deliberately contriv'd, knowingly carried on, by the bold Imposition of Priests, and under the Name of Christianity.

‘ Tho' such Assemblies were not abolished in England upon the Reformation, yet their Power was to curtail'd by Act of Parliament, that they could not attempt any Thing without the King's Licence first obtain'd. And whether some Attempts of late, without such a Licence, have not involv'd certain Persons in a *Premunire*, is not my Business to enquire; and yet as much as their Power is cramp'd, no small Number of the most eminent of them very ingeniously confess, *That such Assemblies are not much for the Advantage of Religion*. That the late excellent Archbishop (Tillotson) was of this Opinion, the Author of the *Letter to the Convocation-Man* will bear me Witness, and the present Bishops are censor'd by the High-flyers, as concurring in the same Sentiments. And Dr. Wake expressly declares, ‘ *That nothing at this*

‘ Day

Day preserves us from Ruin and Desolation, but that we (the Clergy) have not Power of our selves to do the Church a Mischief.' And the Prince, who sees too much of our Temper, is too gracious to us, and has too great a Concern for the Church's good, to suffer us to do it. And indeed what good can be expected from the Meeting of Men, When their Passions are (as the said great Prelate says) let loose, and their Minds disorder'd, when their Interests and Designs, their Friends and their Parties ; nay, their very Judgments and Principles lead them different Ways ; and they agree in nothing so much as being very Peevish, and very Angry with one another, when their Reason is deprav'd ; and they judge not according to Truth and Evidence, but with Respect to Persons ; and every one opposes what another of a different Perswasion moves or approves of.

I need add nothing to so flagrant an Example of Insolence but this, That while Times are such, that the Church of *England* cannot have Justice against such Usage as this, her Friends ought to be very wary how they bring any Questions about her, be they as clear as they will, upon the Stage of Dispute.

SIR,
If you think the enclos'd Papers will be of any Service in the present Controversy, I give them up entirely to your Disposal.

I am, SIR,

Yours, &c.

CHARLES COLLINS.

May 16.
1717.

The Alpine Larch is a deciduous tree with a pyramidal shape, reaching a height of 20-30 meters. It has long, thin, light-colored needles and small, round cones. The bark is thin and greyish-brown, with prominent lenticels.

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